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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of educational resilience in at-risk students involves complex questions and answers. Seven people were interviewed whose lives are chronicled in the context of surviving and achieving despite significant barriers to success in life. They encountered common hindrances arising from poverty, racial and ethnic identity, isolation, hostile environments, lack of education history, linguistic and cultural adjustment, conflict between school and home, and neglect and abuse. Six conditions reversing the effects of adversity and enabling coping strategies were identified in these stories, including a strong family, a support system, good teachers, caring adults, role models, and turning points and other significant experiences. Respondents' educational achievements commonly resulted in sensitivity to the struggles of others, performing service to others, and finding meaning in their experiences. Insights from these stories suggest that resilience is a transformational process involving not just the individual but also society and culture. It helps low-income students bridge the education gap and cross class boundaries. Recommendations for overcoming educational adversity include raising expectations of students, ending or curbing social labeling, providing opportunities, improving social services, and fostering a culture of equality. (Contains 48 references.) (RT)

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